

Wokingham Town 0, Wycombe Wanderers 0

AFTER last Tuesday's epic against Hendon, I suppose it was inevitable the next game — an away Premier Midweek Floodlight League encounter at Wokingham — would be something of an anti-climax. Even so, a contest between the top team in Division One of the Rothmans Isthmian League and the bottom club in Division Two should have ended in only one result — a Wycombe victory (writes Stuart Earp).

In the end it could have been the complete opposite. Wokingham, obviously motivated by meeting the league leaders, could easily have snatched victory in the second half and indeed had a good looking "goal" disallowed.

Wanderers could summon very little interest in this game despite the fact that the three points from an away victory could have given them the section A title there and then. Now Banbury, with one match left at home to Wokingham, should finish with 15 points while Wycombe have two matches left — home and away to Marlow — a maximum of 18. Owing to the floodlighting restrictions earlier in the term and the fixture backlog of many clubs, the league will not be staging the play-offs to decide the competition. Instead each section's winners will receive a plaque.

There were, of course, several changes from the Wycombe side that beat Hendon. Kevin Raine came in for Maskell, Graham Mackenzie for Reardon, and Dylan Evans for Searle. Terry Rogers, a player from the Reading area, made his debut for the Blues in place of Horseman.

The changes meant Wanderers lost much of the teamwork and cohesion. There were some occasional flashes of individual brilliance, notably when Mick Holfield and Paul Birdseye both beat several players with fine control, but they tried to get through the whole defence and predictably failed.

Wokingham, despite the league position, proved remarkably resilient. The veteran former Maidenhead defender Brian Pitts, playing his penultimate game before retiring, formed a solid partnership with ex-Wanderer Charlie Gale while Graham Smallbone produced some glimpses of real ability. Town's greatest asset, however, was their competitiveness.

Early on Wycombe were given a stream of possession as the home side threw the ball away with poor passing in midfield and out of defence. Mike Dixon saved well from a swerving Pritchard drive but a minute later Kevin Raine, playing against his old club, had to dive full length to palm out Smallbone's header. Soon afterwards Birdseye robbed Kirk Corbin in the nick of time.

There was an anxious moment for goalkeeper Raine mid-way through the half when he completely miscued a goalkick but John Griffiths was unable to capitalise on the situation. Evans wasted the best chance of the half, shooting over the crossbar when unmarked at the far post.

The second period was notable only for Wokingham's improvement and Wycombe

supporters had little to cheer about. In the 49th minute Griffiths headed home a cross from the right which Raine completely missed but the referee mysteriously disallowed the effort. A minute later Raine atoned for his earlier error when he blocked Griffiths' shot with his legs after the home forward had raced through a square defence.

With basics beginning to go wrong, Wycombe deteriorated as the half progressed. The advent of Keith Searle for the ineffective Rogers, however, soon made an impact. With his first touch of the ball, Searle slipped a pass inside to Perrin in the 68th minute. Steve lined up a low drive which beat Dixon all the way but thudded against the upright and bounced out. It was the closest Wycombe came to scoring all night.

Terry Reardon replaced Phil Wood in the 73rd minute and ten minutes later Wokingham almost went ahead after a mix-up in the visitors' defence. Corbin was chasing a long ball through the back four. Keith Mead had the ball under control and passed back but he failed to spot that Raine had come a long way off his line. Fortunately for the Blues Raine blocked the back pass with his legs but it was another case of poor understanding between defenders and the goalkeeper — similar to the incident that gave Ilford the lead through a Mead own goal last week.

Smallbone set up a final chance for Griffiths which went into the crowd and Reardon provided the best shot of the game with 60 seconds left when he drove a 30 yard effort just over the crossbar. Reardon's effort brought a touch of excitement to a game best forgotten.

WYCOMBE: K. Raine; P. Wood (sub. T. Reardon 73 mins); K. Mead, D. Bullock, P. Birdseye, L. Pritchard, G. Mackenzie, M. Holfield, D. Evans, S. Perrin, T. Rogers (sub. K. Searle 67 mins).

WOKINGHAM: M. Dixon; D. Pym, P. New, J. Fellows, B. Pitts, C. Gale, G. Smallbone, A. Herbert, K. Corbin, R. Stubbs, J. Griffiths. Subs: R. Weatherley, F. Smith (not used).

PREMIER MIDWEEK FLOODLIGHT LEAGUE

| | Section A | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
| Banbury | 9 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 18 | 11 | 13 |
| Wycombe | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 16 | 10 | 19 |
| Chesham | 10 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 17 | 10 |
| Marlow | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 | 17 | 10 |
| Maidenhead | 10 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 14 | 10 |
| Wokingham | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 7 |